

THE EDUCATION OF PARTHENIA

A CHAMBER DRAMA IN ONE ACT

BY

JAMES C. BURKE

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THE EDUCATION OF PARTHENIA

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INTRODUCTION

THE EDUCATION OF PARTHENIA is the final manifestation of a one act play that originally was entitled *The Garden*. Since composing the first draft during my undergraduate years in the 1970s, the work has evolved at least six times. *The Garden* was staged on two occasions in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Prior to each production, the material was extensively revised. The last revision preceding the present imprint was undertaken in 2009. By that time, with minor exceptions, the text had undergone its final phase of extensive editing. Nevertheless, the present edition has one major modification. Earlier versions used allegorical names for the characters. Even so, the characters were developed to address existential questions. Recently, I created a family of characters that have more familiar attributes and are multidimensional. They have been utilized in other works of a more conventional nature. They are the principals in this version. These stock characters are:

PARTHENIA POISSON. She is an intellectual of the highest order that has a twin, real or imaginary. Parthenia has incredible insight, but is socially awkward, and at times, naïve.

GENEVIEVE POISSON. She is often the twin, but sometimes – as here – the mother, Genevieve possesses all the social graces, and a quick wit. She can be oppressive at times, and obdurate. Family is the core of her existence.

DOCTOR DEBOW MCFARLAND. Dr. McFarland is a physician. Invariably, he is Parthenia's friend and trusted confidant. In this work, he is her twin; however, he is the living twin and she is not. Parthenia, or his manufactured illusion of her, struggles to understand the universe through his memories and sensations. DeBow often entertains the notion that she is a ghost, or he has gone insane. He finally accepts that she has been sharing his mind from birth – she was stillborn. Parthenia definitely believes she is

real, but her allegorical representations of the world are a distortion of whatever she has been able to glean from her brother's mind. Adding to her difficulties, she has created a mirror world for herself that Debow knows nothing about. Their common ground is their dreams and nightmares; yet, both want to unite as one.

PRESTON. He is generally a love interest for Parthenia and/or Genevieve; but in this play, he is Genevieve's second son. Parthenia thinks he is her only brother. She does not realize that old Dr. McFarland is her twin. Preston is an intelligent, good-natured gentleman that often comes to grief as a result of the action of one or both of the ladies.

The plot unfolds within the realm of dreams. In performance, the set should be minimal, and should not suggest a time period. It can be staged in the open air, or as readers theatre. The text is written in free verse. Even thus, the phrasing generally flows naturally, albeit asymmetric at times.

In spite of my recent revisions, remains an examine of my earlier work – an artifact of my youth. It is also deeply connected to the period in which it was written, the 1970s.

THE EDUCATION OF PARTHENIA addresses the question of how far afield we can reason when our assessment of what is real is based on limited information, too much of one kind, or absence of a critical link. Parthenia's revolutionary rants are entirely founded on her brother's experiences during an unnamed war, and his anatomical and zoological readings. As a result, her nightmare soliloquies end up sounding like a schizophrenic fusion of Maximilien Robespierre and Ayn Rand. Likewise, her verbal volleys in the mother-daughter confrontations with Genevieve are particularly vicious. Genevieve, however, does not throw punches. She calls Parthenia a "Nothing Girl" often, alluding to the suggestion that Parthenia is a delusional product of her own guilt-ridden conscious. Preston admits to Dr. McFarland that he has to lie to his mother and sister to keep from being squashed out of

existence in their private conflicts. The conflagration from without permeates familial relationships for all the players; but arguments concerning class and dark family secrets are flash points for total war on the home front. Ironically, it is all the product of Parthenia's delusions – rather, she and her brother's shared nightmare. After Genevieve's pseudo suicide, Parthenia realizes her perceptions of the past are an illusion.

PARTHENIA

One minute, please!

This did not happen!

It doesn't play; maybe,

You cheated me!

You slipped!

In the dream garden, Parthenia melts into a nostalgic, melancholic innocent – a stark contrast. This is the rest state of her intellectual and emotional existence. She is exactly like her twin. Parthenia's nightmares are DeBow's nightmares. The resolution of their mutual affliction comes when DeBow accepts her as part of his being.

Duration: app. 60 minutes.

THE EDUCATION OF PARTHENIA

(A Chamber Drama in One Act)

By

James C. Burke

SCENE ONE

SETTING: The action takes place in an ornamental garden behind a building on any old university campus. It is not a real place; rather, it is the architecture manufactured in a dream. The period is indeterminate.

AT RISE: DOCTOR DEBOW MCFARLAND is seated on a massive stone bench. He closes a book the he has been reading.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Twilight...
A chill in the air;
The fog obscures a distant point of light.
What is hidden behind the fog?

(He points to the Sun).

Our great star: its disarmed glory;
You can not find it... liquefied, melting, it slipped!

The fog: so fragile, almost nothing.
Can this void the Colossus?

We are so close to everything – with our minds.
The entire creation is everywhere around us;

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (cont.)

Still, we see nothing.
What hides under the fog?

Winter is coming to this garden.
A time of purgation:
Everything, loved or despised, all abandoned;
Everything, loved or despised, will be rotten.
And what about last year's flowers?

These unique structures came from the Earth for a season;
Their short-lived primal beauty revitalized the campus.
Nevertheless, I have forgotten my simple commitment to enjoy
them.
Like so much life, they were obscured by the fog.

The flowers go on without me.
No time is lost on my account.

Many flowers bloomed this year.
Why consider them?

Select the fallen petals and include all;
Measure parts - length and width.
Put them in a jar, in a box, between the leaves of a book;
But the flower cannot be reassembled.

When was the seed planted?
Which day will the first flower bloom?

Can I know that a particular flower is the last?
What will I call it?
What flower was the most perfect?

The questions unanswered... forever!

Let us consider the problem again.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (cont.)

When I was a student, there were two thoroughfares to the
University:

One long and one short.

The choice was long or short - a dialectical point of view on the
issue was out of the question.

In other words, I was alone with the seeds of confusion:

What did I miss along the way?

Was it wise to learn about life rather than live the business?

Is the pursuit of craft and family the good life?

Could I have been mistaken in the decision to devote my life to
scholarship?

Should I reverse route, to satisfy my curiosity?

It does not matter.

They come and go, all travelers on the road to extinction;

All marching into the mist!

Everything is seen through the haze.

The desire, the worry, the obsession!

The disposition of all things, to know at any time:

This is the greatest insanity!

The efforts of the day create the questions;

And the work of the night is madness.

My students are travelling:

After a visit to this place,

I never see them again.

What is hidden behind the fog?

(PROFESSOR PARTHENIA POISSON enters the garden).

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (cont.)

I see them now, through the murkiness...
My colleagues never sleep... Miss Parthenia-
She has a lot to forget, to avoid the madness of the night:

Both the brother and mother of the professor died a year ago.
The brother, Preston, a medical student, was a casualty of war.
The grieving mother committed suicide...

Poor Genevieve, her mother;
She was young, while widowed with children;
And an unusual alliance formed between mother and son.
It was a curse that marked him for death – he was her puppet.
This is the plot of their tragedy – very much like the Greeks.

PARTHENIA

An evening for a walk, Herr Doktor?

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

No moon tonight...
The fog obscures it.

PARTHENIA

Perhaps, there is no moon at all?

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

The things that were taken away from me are unknowable, no
matter what their true disposition may be.
Tonight, you could dream, and this garden is your dream...
Then again, we could be in a theater?

PARTHENIA

Becoming part of your script tonight?

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

For my part, in turn, their parts;
The rose petals scattered about by the wind:

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (cont.)

Nothing can be assembled to its former beauty.
Alone in my bed, I dream my own dreams;
Maybe I'm dreaming for you?

PARTHENIA

A dream for a dream.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

A shiver... cold, but not quite cold enough to freeze our emotions.
Our painful thoughts remain.

PARTHENIA

My memory of summer;
The storm has passed, yet
The memories linger.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

I remember your mother in her youth.
Standing in the moonlight,
In her flowing white dress,
And a long string of onyx beads:
She was a heavenly sight!

PARTHENIA (cold)

Where was she standing?

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (trying to remember)

Near the roses? Yes, that is what I recall.

PARTHENIA

There?

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Yes.

PARTHENIA

Let me mark the place.

(PARTHENIA places a brick from the flower bed near the
rose bush. She smiles.)

The place is marked... I need reminders attached to my memories
In anticipation of becoming older.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (reproaching)

How foolish we are, if we insist upon living in the past.
The temptation to indulge in ritual is still too great.

PARTHENIA

If only I had a picture of her;
A strip of ribbon from her hair;
And I should have a lock of that hair...
To experience... to feel the touch of her hand.
A kiss on my forehead.

She was very sweet; and in truth, the kindest of mothers.
We were so close: it was almost a sisterly love we shared.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

How sad... like a wasp caught between two windows,
You look and see the world - a bright sky of hopes;
Wishes - longing for an uncertain world of new experiences...
But you are trapped between the panes of glass.

PARTHENIA

I can not forget!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Thus, why at this late hour are you here? Why come to me?

PARTHENIA

I have nowhere else to go!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Why?

PARTHENIA

Too many times, I am troubled with dreams!
Now, in your company, I mark the ground;
Hold a piece of ribbon in my hand, and
Wish I had not closed the door on the past.

But it's closed!

My memory of having lived fails me beyond a certain point.
Only when we take our walks
Do I remember events from my childhood.

Then, the nightmares return!

Always, they end with the hand holding the revolver;
Pointed at me! The report!-I fall!-I wake up!

(DOCTOR MCFARLAND picks up the brick; and then, takes
the last flower. He uses these objects to illustrate his response
to PARTHENIA's statements.)

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Ribbons and flowers;
One road chosen and one not;
A kiss and a shadow
All this:
Pieces! ... Fallen, broken pieces!
The wasteland of the mind,
Whose vast expanse has no boundaries,
Is the dumping ground of the Universe!
Fallen, broken pieces

(DOCTOR MCFARLAND drops the brick. He shows
PARTHENIA the rose.)

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (cont.)

By our nature, we are concerned with the disposition of all things,
at all times.

That's why we love others:

A distraction from all the things...

Tumbling, shattered pieces of the past; that which is beyond our
reach behind the window.

It is the way of all good things – and bad:

PARTHENIA

Tell me about alone.

What is it?

The broken pieces, aside – what drives us on in spite of it?

The light of your knowledge reflects in the waters of the
unattainable.

Tell me of true solitude, magnificent oneness;

From the serene, majestic, vantage above Nothing;

Being alone, how does one manage to survive?

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (Smiling)

To be part of God's dream while He is awake

Waiting for the night: that is loneliness.

That is Mankind.

(PARTHENIA measures the ground with her hands.)

PARTHENIA

Mark the distance - The mind was made to do such things-

Where it is, or seems to be...

(PARTHENIA picks up the brick.)

PARTHENIA (cont.)

Ritual has become a science;
Mark it with a brick!

Madness has become a science.

(PARTHENIA pounds the brick on the ground.)

Mark it with a brick!
Mark it with a brick!

(There is a sound of a soprano voice singing in the distance.)

Hear that?
In the cool evening's breeze... A single voice,
Singing words of the dead.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

The voice of a child,
The song of life, not long-lived.
The simple honesty:
Memory is not as resilient;
No misgivings to rot the spirit.

Pure! ... Even in its emptiness, it is pure.

Life was never so complete as when we were young!
We should have remained innocent...

PARTHENIA

Innocent?

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Each hour we labor on our monuments,
Only to abandon them in the wasteland...

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (cont.)

Tumbling into ruins... or collecting dust on the shelves.

(The singing stops.)

Poor child... They've strangled it.

Now, they'll give her art songs, and teach her proper breathing...

So much, to be lost forever...

Go home, Miss Parthenia, and sleep... Dream your dreams...

Rest now... before your mind begins its nightly work.

Even the night offers no break from labor; for

Madness has no clock.

(End Of Scene 1.)

INTER SCENE

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Parthenia is somebody living in my imagination.
Why she came, I cannot say; even so,
She is feeding on my thoughts.

Perhaps, she is borrowing from my experiences?

Dark things abide in my mind;
They are not necessarily experiences; and
They are not memories:

Things not said;
Things not acted upon; and
Hurts that I would rather not think about.
Surely, the same holds true for everybody.

If we were brutes in the forest,
Thought would be made manifest in action through impulse.
Needless to say,
Mankind enjoys the benefit of reason and forethought.
If we were to act on impulse as a matter of course,
The results might harm us.
Lessons from experience and completion often prove
Our first impressions, the raw, unweighted product of our senses,
Is insufficient cause for action.

The mouse follows his senses into the trap;
The dog bites the hand that feeds it;
The herd follows the leader over the precipice.

There is, however, a price to be paid for reflection:
Mankind carries through life a treasury of nightmares-
All the fears, disappointments, and deferred desires.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (cont.)

What is my nightmare?
Parthenia!

I am afraid she is my twin returned.

I had a girl twin, but she was stillborn.
Every so often, for as long as I can recall,
A lady glances my way; and I can tell,
Parthenia is there... So I think, for an instant.

Reason tells me that this is nothing more than my regret:
Regret for having been born alive – I venture to say at her expense,
Though speculation is not proof.

Reason tells me, all is done with, and regret of her death will hurt
me.
Parthenia is rational, too; and she is piecing things together without
me.
When I sit down to write, she brings me something new.
I do not like it. It is the stuff of my nightmares!

A dream for a dream...

Now that Parthenia has taken up residence,
She knows about the war – but not how it divided us;
She knows about the revolver – but few particulars; and
Becoming acquainted with Mother is her ultimate goal.

Parthenia will not stop until she knows everything about me:
More than what I would tell her if she were alive; and God forbid,
All that I keep to myself.

Why has she not aged with me?
Where was she when everything happened?
I could have used her help.

SCENE TWO

SETTING: Parthenia's nightmare occurs in the Wayside Academy for Young Women. Actually, it is a stage erected in the courtyard garden from Scene One viz theatre within the theatre.

CURTAIN: There are five young GIRLS gathered around a large toy box. PARTHENIA sits on the lid. As similar to the girls, she wears hair ribbons. In the text, the GIRLS are individually identified, such as FIRST, SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH and FIFTH. The FIRST is the youngest and the oldest is the FIFTH. The rest span ages between these two. GIRLS implies the school girls by themselves as a chorus. ALL includes PARTHENIA. The GIRLS are PARTHENIA at all stages of life up to adulthood.

PARTHENIA (pointing into the dark)

There he is!
See there! And there!
Hiding in the garden, behind every tree,
Are the great men that we followed.

Watering the flowers with the blood of millions of people.

Under their rule, we satisfied the furnace of our Age
With the lives of future generations.

FIFTH

Low wages and long hours!
See the man who works hard labor in vain
For the glory of the gods and masters.

GIRLS

The Cross and the Whip!

PARTHENIA

The Cross and the Whip!

(She stands)

Then came justice... WAR!

Everything was in ruins: their money was turned to ashes
In the heat of our Age.

FOURTH

Life was meaningless, an empty farce:
They blunted our teeth with credit and desire;
The desire for a better future, and diversion
Instead of substance and learning.
And we, the children, learned the truth!

To believe, to follow: we are doomed!

PARTHENIA

Out, Herr Doktor... In the Light!
Meet the needs of your students.

(DOCTOR MCFARLAND advances.)

They need instruction in the noble arts,
With the failure of the market,
They are in need of employment stability.

THE FIRST

Survive!
I need to survive!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Survive? Is that all?

(PARTHENIA takes the arm of DOCTOR MCFARLAND.)

PARTHENIA (whispering)

Survival of the fittest, that's the ticket!
Crawl on your stomach like a lizard;
Swing through the trees like a monkey;
Growl and bark like a dog.

This is the way of the world:
Masters and Slaves!

Each climbing his way up the great dung hill;
Stuffing his mouth full of rancid meat;
Drinking from bodies of standing water and open sewers.

It's the natural order,
The striver can not put on pants or be perfumed!
Sink or swim, eat or be eaten, making love or being taken!

GIRLS (singing)

He who fights and runs away
Comes back to the party another day!

PARTHENIA

Masters and slaves,
I love them all; for
They have made us what we are.

They taught us to overcome them!
Dear friend, do not forget the labors of Heracles.

THIRD (With concern)

Of course not,
Lest he dash his foot against a stone!

(PARTHENIA takes a toy popgun, complete with cork and string, from the toy chest. She displays pride in the weapon while speaking with MCFARLAND.)

PARTHENIA

To be one with the music;
To be in step with the dance:
One must feel the rhythm.

(PARTHENIA suddenly turns to the oldest girl, the FIFTH.
She points the gun at her. The FIFTH displays shock at this
gesture.)

Fear is pure;
It's natural!
To resist the call of nature only leads to anxiety.
Anxiety is the one-legged waltz.

(PARTHENIA pulls the FIFTH out into the open.)

FOUTH

Only fear resurrects the reptile: that kinetic beast.

THIRD

Kill again!

(PARTHENIA grasps the FIFTH by her hair.)

PARTHENIA

Hate without action is nothing!
Violence is the mode of action

Kill or be killed!

(PARTHENIA cocks the trigger on the pop gun.)

ALL (like a soldier's chant)

In the light, all in delight,
With pleasure forever!

FIFTH

Have mercy, for Christ's sake!

(The GIRLS laugh.)

PARTHENIA

Did you hear that?

(The GIRLS come closer.)

Enough of your Christ!

Oh, would it please me to expunge your Christ!

Your gods and devils; your cash deities and consumer icons:

All a pointless accident in the natural order!

For Christ's sake...

(PARTHENIA throws the FIFTH to the ground, and then
points the pop gun at her.)

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

The defender of the rights of the common man kills a defenseless
captive?

This is a pretty sight!

This is the natural order?

The failures soon perish?

They were not made to reach the heights?

Look at yourself, and see!

If you were not thieves and murderers, then

How do you go on living?

SECOND

We were not born thieves and murderers!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

What is mankind?
We are born free and equal,
Our fate is what we make it.

(PARTHENIA laughs.)

PARTHENIA (speaking with the GIRLS)

These are the types who end up writing books!
He will plant foolish notions into simple minds...

Go home, old book reader,
Your simplicity betrays you:
An idealist; a dreamer!
The lowly, dirty, and poor: fine examples, indeed.
Drunkards and wife beaters...
Don't sing to ME your praises of the proletariat!

If you were one of them, how great would your crimes be?

FOURTH

Take care, the day will come when we will be your masters!

PARTHENIA (speaking to DOCTOR MCFARLAND)

In time, you too will see the light.
Power is the truth! It comes at the end of a gun; and the
One who holds the gun...

(PARTHENIA points the gun at MCFARLAND and laughs
at him.)

Need I say more? Still, the well-trained crowd is useful on
occasions-

GIRLS

Vox Populi vox dei!

(The GIRLS disperse in the dark, laughing.)

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Who are these monstrous girls, Parthenia?

PARTHENIA

Orphans for today, Herr Doktor. You know them by name.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Who takes care of them?

PARTHENIA

I do... I've always taken care of them.
There are five, but soon there will be more.
Their parents are dead, you see, and I
Must keep them strong so they can take care of me.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

They are very much like you.

PARTHENIA

My mother would have thought so.

(The GIRLS enter equipped with brooms and wash buckets.
PARTHENIA stands at the center of the group.)

Where did it all begin?

In the womb;
In the trees;
Some stagnate pond?

The struggle to the top is endless!

Who is the fastest?
Who is the strongest?
Who has the most marbles?

PARTHENIA (cont.)

For ourselves and our children
We want the best that life can offer,
In the world we have earned.

More often than not we stand silent
Without the safety of the crowd,
Unless we are leading it.

Yet, leading is easier than you think.
Most in the crowd are only concern with satisfying their most
immediate needs; therefore,
Know their needs, and you will lead an army.

Armies marching on forever!
In the darkness, and in the light!
And like a thundering silence,
So comes the morning!

FIRST

Go up, I say!
Fill the sky!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

See this!
The hardened teeth begin to chew.
Hour to hour, they labor for the better day.
As their brothers are slaughtered on the soil of distant lands,
They clear away the royal rubbish on the path to future madness.

Knowing not, all women, too, are soldiers...
As are the children, and the old.

How's that?

PARTHENIA

Labour, citizens! Work for freedom!

PARTHENIA (cont.)

Freedon for me!

FIFTH

And me!

THIRD

And me!

ALL

And me!

PARTHENIA (Speeking to the GIRLS)

Try to resist;

Take an oblique course:

There is no end to the suffering

For those who oppose the authority of common needs!

In the past, we put our faith in our kings;

Our God, who laughs at us from afar;

And to love words like "Duty" and "Honor".

Time and again, we thought ourselves safe.

We told our sons and brothers,

Please the powers that be; and hope

For the sleep of conformity.

Now, we must lift our voices in protest: all that divides mankind,

All that pits the nations against each other must be removed!

Down with the old order!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

And that is the way it should be, for it is a necessary condition:

If all the people are free and equal surely world peace will follow.

(THE GIRLS place the wash buckets on their heads, and hold the brooms like rifles. PARTHENIA removes the bucket on the head of the FIRST.)

PARTHENIA

But the masters enlist the simple minded, and
Plunder the treasury with impunity,
Calling theft necessary for the common good.
They buy politicians to subvert the will of the people; and
Enlist the philosophers of greed to teach in the universities.

No one is responsible for their crimes;
A coward's stance is commendable:
It is a blessing in this Age of Belief.

Go running in delight.

GIRLS (chanting)

In delight,
In delight,
In delight, forever!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Ooooo

(DOCTOR MCFARLAND walks to center stage.)

An ominous prognosis:
Here we see the denunciation of aspiration,
And a passion for congruity.

(He conducts a review of the rank of GIRLS.)

This is the making of the totalitarian state-
The reactionary state!
It is born from the market and the factory.
Born in a world like this,

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (cont.)

Where the cement of all natural affections
Is cash...

The Coward: An Absolute Consumer!

(DOCTOR MCFARLAND joins the rank of GIRLS.)

To blend into the crowd,
And hold no ground.

PARTHENIA

Take to the crowd!

SECOND

We are the people, we are in unity!
Take to the crowd,
Forever!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

And hold no ground.

PARTHENIA

Lo, they stalk their prey!

GIRLS

And heave our stones!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

The eyes... open, senseless;
White hot with silent rage - glowing!
Like pools of molten glass.

THIRD (To DOCTOR MCFARLAND)

Speak more lies.

PARTHENIA

All will be glossed over, in an artful way...

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

And if I should die before I wake?

PARTHENIA

No time will be lost on your account.

(DOCTOR MCFARLAND walks over to the toy chest.)

GIRLS

Molten Glass and Shards of Pottery;
Bloody Knives and Hangman's Knots:
Glory of the Ruling Party.

Jesus loves me; yes, I know;
For our predecessors told us so.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (Insistent)

And if I should die before I wake?

SECOND (Teasing)

Running is no longer justified!

PARTHENIA (To MCFARLAND)

A sign of the times, you see:
The masses must be fed.
Food is Control.
Food is Freedom.
To Work is to Eat.
To steal hard-earned bread from mothers is justification for
Revolution!

(Commanding the GIRLS)

Why?!

(The GIRLS come to attention.)

GIRLS

Because I am compelled to, Mother!
Beyond that, I cannot say.

PARTHENIA (speaking to DOCTOR MCFARLAND)

You see!
A jury of your peers... or perhaps,
Your comrades. Think twice before you deny
The existence of a common enemy.
Innocence and intellect abhor the Tyranny of Greed., but
Both can abide brutality in the name of Justice.

ALL (singing)

Hang the Tyrant from a pole,
Let the crows pick out his eyes,
Burn his flesh with hot coals,
Peel the meat from his bones.

Awake, Justice must be done!
Sister, give us sharp knives!
Quick, cut out his lying tongue,
Feed it to the dogs, Alleuia!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (to GIRLS)

Who taught you that song?

ALL

You did, Herr Doktor!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

You do not understand anything!
I want a world governed by reason and law.
This is a misinterpretation of my writings!

PARTHENIA

But, Herr Doktor, we are privy to the unpublished subtext.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Stop calling me Herr Doktor!

FIFTH

Let us have a spectacle!

A marvel for the sake of your curiosity.

FIFTH (cont.)

All mouths water for the taste of blood;

From time to time,

A taste for the reptile.

(She looks inside DOCTOR MCFARLAND's overcoat.)

Hidden behind the spotless robes

Of honored lords-

(She pulls a lizard out of an inside pocket of DOCTOR
MCFARLAND's coat.)

There!

He crawls with happiness!

SECOND

In pleasure,

He crawls in joy,

Forever!

(The FIFTH smiles brightly, and hands DOCTOR
MCFARLAND the lizard. MCFARLAND drops it on the
ground.)

THIRD

Tell the old book reader about our plight!

SECOND

Tell him about our mother-

FIRST

Yes, mother-

FIFTH

And our brother, too. Tell him all the horrors.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

No, Parthenia!

Hitherto, you have come to wild conclusions built upon limited understanding.

If you venture into the realm of your birth, you will be harmed;

And that which inflicts the wounds will be nothing, an illusion.

You do not know what happened prior.

PARTHENIA

Here it begins,

At first light...

A birth!

(The GIRLS clap their hands.)

SECOND

Today will be your day of glory!

(The lid of the toy chest opens. A girlish face pokes out from inside. She is PARTHENIA's mother, GENEVIEVE.)

FOURTH

Ah, splendid!

A female child;

Be our mother, if you can.

(The woman hides inside of the chest. The GIRLS place their brooms on the ground, and then they drag GENEVIEVE to the outside of the box. GENEVIEVE is wound in a jump rope at the waist.)

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

This is your mother;
Genevieve returned to you.
The wife of a doctor, and a mother.
Good things have been said about the lady.

Good things have been said about the man.
For one, he was my friend, and I
Was happy, he found a bride.
Parthenia, your mother was a great lady.

Then, short of a week before the birth of a son,
Your father was killed in a train accident. I know!
I was there on the seat beside him.
He was killed, and I was not.

Some say, his sudden death drove your mother crazy with grief.

PARTHENIA

You are still withholding the truth from me, Doctor!
I do not believe you are who you say you are.
Are you my father? Are you a ghost?

GENEVIEVE

Survive! ... I need to survive!

(PARTHENIA reaches down and picks up the end of the jump rope hanging from GENEVIEVE's waist. She starts to tug on it.)

PARTHENIA

This is the shape of things to come:

PARTHENIA (cont.)
A lifetime of pulling dead weight.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND
What dead weight?

PARTHENIA
Where's the boy, Mother?

(PARTHENIA pulls on the jump rope.)

I know you are hiding him! Send him out!
You cannot keep him forever.

GENEVIEVE (tugging)
Nothing Girl;
Vomit of the womb;
I know your inner thoughts,
And scheming ways.

You would turn his heart against me!

PARTHENIA
And you have him a child forever:
A man child for a man lost, mother?
How dare you?!

GENEVIEVE
What is that to you?!
Can you give him more,
With your heart of iron
And wicked tongue?

PARTHENIA
Reflect on this, dear mother...

(PARTHENIA picks up one of the brooms.)

PARTHENIA (cont.)

The ways of the world are brutal, and with father gone,
I have no aegis before me-
Not when I face the world alone:
Sending me off to school; and that,
When your little prince clung to your skirt.

(PARTHENIA strikes GENEVIEVE with the broom.)

GENEVIEVE

What is this? You strike your own mother?

THIRD (with a handful of coins)

The coins, you see, the coins;
Bathe yourself in golden coins,
Bring forth a god, not a dog.
See the man walk ahead;
See the beloved man.

FIFTH

Marry well while you are still young!

(The GIRLS pick up their housekeeping equipment, and then
gather around GENEVIEVE.)

GENEVIEVE

No!

THE ENTIRE COMPANY (on and off stage)

Why not?

PARTHENIA

The highest bid for the prize!

Going once...

Going twice?

THE ENTIRE COMPANY

Sold!

PARTHENIA

To the professor with a lizard in his pocket!

GENEVIEVE

I am not for sale!
I am not an illusion of a person;
For to dwell in the flesh,
To hope and to dream
Is not a reflection of life!

You would play my nature against me.

Like Judas,
You would play my nature against me!

I can anticipate coercion henceforth to the grave;
A demand for supplication; and
The threat of being left out in the cold:
This is what it means to be born into my class.

"Make for us a soldier, if you are up to it!"
Nurse him, clothe him, dry his childish tears...
Then bury him!

Broken limbs and gaping wounds,
On a slab of white marble, he rests,
Eyes fixed from the moment of impact.

See Him!

The smell of burnt flesh; disfigured beyond recognition.
Carve his name in stone, then forget him...

This? For thirty pieces of silver, and a bouquet of roses!

GENEVIEVE (cont.)

Show me the stones!

Tombstones!

All the heroes set in a line;

The battalion of the specters...

The trumpet sounds for the assembly of the dead.

(PARTHENIA starts to reel in the jumping rope attached to
GENEVIEVE. The GIRLS form two lines side by side.)

The list goes on... Endless!

They have vanished without a trace!

PARTHENIA

Better to die young and be forgotten-

A handful of ashes thrown to the wind,

Rather than growing old in safety and foolishness.

(The GIRLS march like soldiers. Their brooms are shouldered
like rifles.)

GIRLS

To the left, to the right,

In delight!

Step aside, or be trampled,

In delight!

Marching on Forever!

(The GIRLS form a firing squad in front of GENEVIEVE.
They take aim at her. She takes cover in the toy chest.)

Going once...

Going twice...

PARTHENIA

Fire!

(The GIRLS act as if the brooms have recoiled like rifles.)

See, mother... Nobody likes to hear cowardly words.

(GENEVIEVE quickly retreats into the toy chest, closing the lid behind her.)

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Enough of this! Back to the beginning!

(MCFARLAND casts his book in the air. Parthenia grabs the book before it hits the floor and opens it. In the book there is a picture of an ape. All GIRLS gather around Parthenia to see.)

PARTHENIA (pointing to the illustration)

Here is the great father!
Cool eyes and massive jaw,
White teeth - razor sharp.
Call him Warrior on the Plains;
Hero in the bush;
Ancestor of Agamemnon.

Master of all he undertakes:
Some trees marked with urine.
Old habits die hard, even in the best of worlds.
I am a man!

Best of all,
In all the worlds.
Ecce Homo... Homo sum.
Homo sapiens!

(PARTHENIA takes DOCTOR MCFARLAND by the arm.)

Yet, you say we are lesser gods; and
Not the superior beasts?

PARTHENIA (cont.)

We have wronged the beast,
For the beast is a god in his own right:
The God of War.

To fight for the right
To have the best of things
For ourselves and our children.
Tell us what we want to hear, Father Ape!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

The most trees with the best fruits;
The best mates for more offspring:
Oh, the joy of knowing
The meaning of life.

(He laughs.)

So simple, is it not?

Beneath the undergrowth of coins and bullets
Hides a hungry ape in heat.

GIRLS

How delightful!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

How would you make the man?

PARTHENIA (Laughing)

By reasoning your point to conclusion,
We are to continue bringing children into this world
To be slaughtered by another woman's child
So that her children can bring more children to the slaughter
As women of the past brought us to the fight?
So much pretentious male nonsense!
I did not come here to praise him.

GIRLS

Step aside or be trampled!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

The weak are trampled and cast aside.
Who, by himself, can stand alone?

PARTHENIA

Strength in numbers, Doctor Homo Sapiens.
The collective mass of humanity,
Moving forward into the future!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

United by the most primal common denominator-

PARTHENIA

Yes, they must be led.

(The toy chest opens. PARTHENIA drops the book.)

See this, friends!
Mother gives birth to a child.

We, the masses, give thanks.
Be it a leader or a victim,
We care not.

THIRD

Judge the goods by the price that was paid.

(GENEVIEVE jumps out of the toy chest.)

GENEVIEVE

The time is come!

(THE GIRLS come closer to the toy chest.)

GENEVIEVE (cont.)

Come out and see!
The light of day!

(PRESTON jumps on the toy box. He is wearing a uniform.)

PRESTON

Mother!
So good to see you.

Finally, the day has come to claim my birthright:
An officer, of course,
Like my father and his father before him.

A wonderful time to be alive,
With the War, and all that...

(PARTHENIA throws a broom to her brother PRESTON.)

A glorious day in the best of wars.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

And if you need to be killed in this,
The best of all wars,
Take comfort in knowing that you die the
Best of deaths that can be had.

What is more, your death is just... just!
But in the best of wars, can we be certain
What amount of courage, or lack thereof,
Is relevant?

GIRLS

I pray thee, sir, bugger off!

GENEVIEVE (blind admiration)

He is beautiful!

GENEVIEVE (cont.)

I do love him

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

What a waste!

GENEVIEVE

He had the best of everything, the best I could give.
He has the right to eat from the table!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

So, you send him off to war - a mere green boy!
Like thousands of others who have done the same.
In the end, he will overstep his bounds,
Engineering his own destruction...

GENEVIEVE

So, true to my expectations, yet
I still love him.

PRESTON

Extend myself?!
Surely you speak about someone else?
This is my day of glory! My birthright!

PARTHENIA (speaking with PRESTON)

This can't be...

(She turns to the GIRLS.)

The child?

(She turns to PRESTON)

Preston... my brother,
Once you told me you wanted to be a healer.
Now you want to kill? How is that?

PRESTON

It is my duty.

PARTHENIA

And to heal is not?

GENEVIEVE

While the other boys are out fighting for God and country,
My son will not be deprived of the glory due to him... Remember,
He was born to his post. Privilege is founded on duty!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

His duty to his comrades is to be their doctor?
He must request the assignment as such, physicians are in short
supply.

GENEVIEVE

What glory is found there?

PARTHENIA

Mother, you are such a fool:
Blown about by the wind of public opinion.
Not once have you followed the dictates of your own heart,
Nor have you allowed your son to follow his own mind.
Some long dead code of honor binds you,
And you would sooner see him dead
Then shake off those rusty chains.

GENEVIEVE

You sound like a revolutionary!
Is that what they taught you in school?
Bring down all that is beautiful,
And let the common rabble have their way?

God help us then!

PRESTON

Stop this bickering!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (sardonically)

Ha! Send those two harpies off to war!

PRESTON

And you too, old friend...

Let me tell you what I know:

I will act as I see fit without regard to another's wishes.
Whatever I do, that is my choice. I have a will of my own,
And a voice that tells me to do something...
Not because it's the right thing to do-
Who is to say what's right?

My mother wants to protect the prerogatives of her class;
My sister is at war with that class;
Yet, she nurtures contempt for the lower classes-
It is impossible for the uneducated to align with the learned:
One is the patriarch, of course.

They hate the war because it was launched by the privileged class;
They hate the war because the lower class believes in it;
They hate war because they hate the future and the past.

Many of my classmates walk this path.
They are intellectual elitists, not revolutionaries.

Tell them a better day is coming, and they'll call you a liar.
"Today, we can fancy ourselves like 'strong-greaved Achaeans';
Tomorrow, we'll come home to a house in ruin."
The educated class is the privileged class without belief in ordinary
humanity:

Since when has a people learned from the follies of another?
That assessment includes the educated.

PRESTON (cont.)

My sister is something worse:
She is a jealous rival acting the part of malcontent.
Mother hates daughter and daughter hates mother:
That is the whole story; nothing more than nature.
They would drag the world into their private war.

Worry not; privilege does not always include power.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Your thinking is backward.
Parthenia wants to protect you:
The war is the world against the family.

PRESTON

Absurd! Family is my war!
Family is her war!
My mother loves the world;
My sister hates the world;
Both, however, love the war.
For different reasons,
Mother and daughter want continuous battle-
Between them. It is their birthright.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

What do you love?

PRESTON

Mother and sister, it is nothing more than nature.
If they were strangers, I would run away.

In parting, let me give you my thoughts on the state of the world.
Man assumes the position that intelligence is the natural trajectory.
For the sake of argument, let us consider the dangers of too much intelligence.
If human beings needed intelligence to survive like other predators in the wild,

PRESTON (cont.)

Nature provided enough for those conditions – the Lord of
Animals.
With too much intelligence, man is not satisfied – he must be
Emperor of the World.
We make things for ourselves that nature could never engineer, yet,
Nature needs none of it.
Man claims stewardship of the Earth, but nothing he has done
improves it;
Rather, he ruins it while seeking transitory benefits for his kind.

Intelligence is an experiment of nature that worked on the small
scale;
But when it was allowed to run its course, it turned into the
Machine of Extinction.

Nature does not care.
She will try something new.
She loves to play.

You can accept my hypothesis, if you like;
But keep in mind that I often tell lies.

My mother and my sister believe that I will fight;
I am assigned to the medical corps... I lied to them.
It is a lie that they deserve:
The price for enlisting me in their perpetual war.

As a physician, I will cheat Nature at her game.
Of course, she does not care.
Farewell, friend; I will see you soon.
The ladies want me to tell more lies.

(PRESTON addresses the GIRLS.)

Our blood washes clean the past; however,
The tear stains linger a little longer than blood.

PRESTON (cont.)

Tears, too, will be forgotten.
Consumed by the Earth,
Which, in time, consumes all.

My ladies, speak sweetly of delights!

GIRLS

In Delight,
In Happiness
In Glory,
Forever!

(PRESTON walks into the darkness, followed by the happy
GIRLS).

(End of Scene 2)

INTER SCENE

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (reading from the book)

Fate turned against him - where men could not;
And the fruits of good fortune rotted in the field.
Not much to say, he chose to be the assistant field surgeon-
It was his vocation, and he saved many lives.

Then by some miscalculations, Nature won the bet:
A barrage of microbes falling from the sky, like bolts from the hand
of Zeus:
He contracted pneumonia and died...

(He closes the book.)

So his mother says that he died in battle?

Do you think she is insane?
That cannot be!
Parthenia is dreaming!
She must be following my script.

I know this is all a dream, and I am rational.
Correspondingly, it follows that in a dream I am not real.

That cannot be!
"All that is real is rational."

I must be dreaming of Parthenia.
Unless, Parthenia and I are one in the same,
Or Parthenia and Genevieve are one in the same,
Or perhaps, we are a passing thought in the mind of God?

Ce qui est caché sous le brouillard?

SCENE THREE

SETTING: The Wayside Academy for Young Women.

AT RISE: DOCTOR MCFARLAND stands along side of the toy box. The chest was overthrown and its contents are scattered on the floor.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Such events have occurred throughout history.
No matter where or when... or even, the players.

Brushes and washing buckets,
Clocks and candies,
Apples and Dolls:

These are the objects of desire!

Outside my mind, there are other objects;
What they might be matters little in the end.

Hidden behind our noble causes,
In the thicket of our culture,
Under the masonry of splendid palaces,
Creeping about cathedral naves,
Hides the hungry ape.

Denial can not obscure his awesome presence.

And when we meet him face to face
Our indifference turns to terror.
We glimpse our own true image
In the mirror of our passions.

Stripped naked! We stand before our judges

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (cont.)

Pleading for a chance to undo transgressions
Wrought into chains of self-deception
By the silent ape.

My-my, the young ladies have a secret.

(He gathers from the heap of toys those of a military type.)

See these, my children...
What good have they brought you?

They have taken war from the field of combat and set it in the sky-
Raining violent death and fire on you...
Women and children, and the old:
We are all soldiers now because Hunger,
Another Ape Of War, is no longer content
To feed upon the meager crop of eager young men.
He consumes the wealth of nations!
He turns towns to ashes, and we keep feeding him..

(He drops the toys.)

Where to go from here? ...

(GENEVIEVE comes into the light.)

GENEVIEVE

A mother knows her own.
Such a beautiful boy he was! How I failed him...
Such things mothers say... "If only I had-"
First four words of the maternal credo.

(PARTHENIA enters with the GIRLS behind her.)

When a woman becomes a mother,
She becomes her mother.

GENEVIEVE (cont.)

And her mother before her.

(The GIRLS hold hands in a circle.)

All joined together with an umbilical cord,
Forged from steel,
Stretching back in time...
To the forest,
In the trees...
Forever.

Beautiful child...
They took you from me.
Please excuse me!
Careless child, how I loved you.

PARTHENIA

Lies!

FIFTH

Forgive us, Lord,
For we know not what we say!

PARTHENIA

You lied to me about his death!

He was not killed in battle;
He died of pneumonia.
Any coward can die of pneumonia!

He lied to you.
He was in the medical corps.
Killing was not in his blood.

FIRST

Why are you angry?

FOURTH

He lied because you disregarded what he had to say.
That was his way of surviving in your war.

PARTHENIA

Who is it? Will you be mourning my dead brother?

GIRLS (insulting)

Forgive me, Lord,
Because I know what I am!

GENEVIEVE

We must pray for him!

THE FIRST

We have a gift for you!

(PARTHENIA snaps HER fingers. The GIRLS take handfuls
of lollipops from THEIR pockets. THEY throw them at
GENEVIEVE.)

Here they are... A statement of being:
Think as a child; remain a child.

Take the prize!

(PARTHENIA throws a lollipop at GENEVIEVE.)

Scraps from my table!

(PARTHENIA throws the second lollipop.)

Scraps for the dogs!

(The GIRLS smile, and then throw their remaining lollipops at
GENEVIEVE. PARTHENIA retains her last lollipop.)

PARTHENIA (cont.)

See, Mother!

This is the wrath of women acting in a delusional world.

We smile and throw lollipops!

We prefer grenades, but the men used the entire supply; yet,-

We still have a charming smile when throwing bombs.

THIRD

You cannot be so mean-spirited!

SECOND

You cannot do violence, sister!

FIFTH

Do no harm!

PARTHENIA

I will not have a man!

I will not have children!

Listen to them!

They are becoming disobedient.

(PARTHENIA unwraps HER lollipop and licks it.)

Stupidity is its own punishment.

Fate was merciful to my father with his early death:

He was spared the sight of your disgrace...

Your childish sobbing.

GENEVIEVE (Angry)

Nothing Girl!

I would feel sorry for you...

If there was pity left in me.

Winter is cold and always long.

GENEVIEVE (cont.)

The road is endless and forever bleak.
It is you who should pity me.

(PARTHENIA takes a toy pistol from the floor, then gives it
to GENEVIEVE.)

PARTHENIA

Here it is! See! This is yours.
Again, show us what you did that night.

(She shows the gun.)

Every move of its mechanism:
A harmonious unity of intellect and brutality;
A state of being and not to be!
Grace itself... in an instant, all the pain evaporated.
Nothing Woman!
We are absolutely free.

All this is to your satisfaction?

Is it not enough to ensure our blessing?
Not even for the sake of your pride?
Look again!

Think about what they will say about you...
And worse...
What you will tell him in the silence of your dreams.
Remember, you were weak! But you can put things right,
Face death with fearlessness.

(She speaks demandingly.)

A blessing, if you please,
For the restoration of order!

ALL

Show us the order!

GENEVIEVE

So, it's order you want.
... I see a special breed of order here.
Something quite rare!

Fulfillment of a wish.
To make myself over in one brilliant stroke.

(She points the gun directly at PARTHENIA and the GIRLS.
A pause.)

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

No, Mother! Not this time!

(With a sigh, Genevieve drops her aim and turns aside.)

GENEVIEVE

I cannot!
My Death... Something pure,
Tears turn the joke to beauty.

They will glorify my weakness as strength,
And my faults, they will forgive...

And perhaps, if some kind person is moved to take pity,
My daughter will have a guide to wisdom... not without pain, but
With nightmares.

Fulfillment of a wish...

Judas and Jesus, I have become.
Like my daughter, so true to my nature:
Jesus and Judas... A Nothing Girl!

(GENEVIEVE walks into darkness. There is a report as if
from a real gun.)

PARTHENIA (calling to GENEVIEVE)

One minute, please!
This did not happen!
It doesn't play; maybe,
You cheated me!

You slipped!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

So, I did... It did not happen this way. Even so,
The price paid was great; indeed,
But in the end, mere folly.

Life is all we have!
It might be useless... We are always alone; but
While we live, there is a future.

Death exists in a vacuum, and in our minds.
To believe that our deaths enrich the world,
Or wipe our slate clean, is pretentious nonsense!

Now, come with me...

(End of Scene 3.)

INTER SCENE

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

I must write this for Parthenia:

(DOCTOR MCFARLAND takes a pencil from his pocket,
and then begins writing on the inside of the book cover.)

Mother did not kill you!
Mother did not kill herself!
I am not your father!

I am your brother, DeBow!

Mother remarried after our father's death.
His name is Alfred Poisson, our father's best friend...
For what it is worth, you are a McFarland... Unless,
You know differently. In that case, I do not want to know.

Preston was our younger brother; and he
Died of pneumonia at the age of four.
I was the physician. Now, I teach at the university.
Look closely at my books. You will understand.

I was in the medical corps during the war.
I am almost certain that I am not dead...

An enemy soldier shot me at close range with his sidearm.
The bullet grazed the crown of my head; after that,
I became aware that you are with me.
Also, I have been lying to you – trying to deny your existence.
Even so, I always suspected that you were there. We will share.

(He stops writing, and closes the book.)

Is she a ghost; or do we share the same mind?... Am I insane?

SCENE FOUR

SETTING: The garden has returned to its original appearance. The stage is gone. It is shortly before dawn.

CURTAIN: DOCTOR MCFARLAND converses with PARTHENIA.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

So, once again we pass another restless night...

PARTHENIA

The moon,
The garden, the chill,
All as they should be.

I can hear your whispers of loneliness through the cold clean air,
Like the soft rustling of leaves...
Such a garden you have become: A thicket!
A thorny dense mass of impenetrable vines - Razor sharp!

Friend, you are so silent... Like a statue, truly alone.
Watch me rave for the pleasure of the moon!

(She looks at DOCTOR MCFARLAND as she points to the moon.)

It's out there
Transfixed in darkness
Intangible, yet, sense it closer.

Waves on a sea of mist;
A warmth long absence from the soul.

And you want it to come.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

The shadows of the past...
Ah, the shadow of you.

PARTHENIA

No!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Yes! The wound is deep.
The eclipse consumes us.

Your waking hours are tormented by memories,
And the night holds its own special breed of terror.

PARTHENIA

I must learn to forget!
Can you teach me that? ... brother...

(DOCTOR MCFARLAND grows impatient. He picks up
PARTHENIA's brick.)

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

To forget?! Is that all you want?
Then what am I doing here?
Here's your brick... Be nothing!

(He places the brick in PARTHENIA's hand.)

Love your false memories!

(MCFARLAND taps the brick.)

Love them!

How can I answer your questions?
Dreams and memories, pain and pleasures,

DOCTOR MCFARLAND (cont.)

All the playthings of the mind.
You measure and count your days away-
Put them in a jar, in a box,
Between the pages of a book...
Mark it with a brick!
What has life taught you?
It is nothing?
Pointless?
Pointless till the end,
Not a minute worth the effort, and not a minute complete?

By what right do you expect to forget?
And hope to gain knowledge through forgetfulness...

The gales of upheaval cannot be restrained!
These winds come often in a lifetime,
Uprooting all that we have planted.

Yet, with such ruin comes renewal;
And while we live, our garden grows.

Static love, from stone or flesh, is but a dream-

(PARTHENIA drops HER brick.)

Such questions!

Do you plan to keep me here all night? I feel the chill...
The chill of age... older...

(The first light of day comes through the mist.)

PARTHENIA

And age comes in a flash...

(MCFARLAND notices the sunrise.)

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

See that!

The Sun:
Light to refresh the future.
See it like a child would see it
Before your mind strangled its beauty.

There will be more summer evenings!

PARTHENIA

Nonsense!
That which was taken from me cannot be replaced:
The child... You will never be a child again.

In my dreams, my mother calls me a Nothing Girl;
My brother lies to me – perpetually; and for some reason,
You are there... So, too, are the girls of the Academy.

None of you are the persons that exist in the world of daytime;
rather,
You are apparitions that contain parts of me – that act like me!
I am becoming deranged by these nightmares... They trick me!
Will my accusers be satisfied if I confess?

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

What is there to confess?

PARTHENIA

Recalling, somewhere in the recesses of my memory,
That I have a father, still living... I recall,
It was I who attempted suicide, not my mother;
My brother, a physician, teaches at this university; and furthermore,
The war happened before I was born – many decades go.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

You have it partially wrong.
I am your brother. You must discover the rest on your own.
You must learn to see through my eyes... we will share.

I am sure that there is something on your side that you want to
share with me... You wake up to something, don't you?

PARTHENIA

So, I am a part of you... brother?

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

That is the second time you called me brother. I think you have
been with me all the time... many decades... since childhood...

PARTHENIA

I will share this:
A child needs no art...
She plays blindly in her beautiful garden; but
As a woman she paints them in pictures and writes poems.
For the first time, she sees the flowers bloom!
Do not abandon me to the shelves!

(The sun comes up over the horizon.)

Behold the light!

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

I will find new adventures for you.

PARTHENIA

I like to play.
I will take an adventure! Bring back my playmates.
In return, we will be your companions.
Even so, I do not want to live in your nightmares!
Our world can be everything that your world is not;
The Ape is not hiding in our cathedral.

PARTHENIA (cont.)

You told me about Mother;
You told me about Father;
You told me about the war;
Now, tell me who I am.

DOCTOR MCFARLAND

Who do you want to be?

PARTHENIA

Parthenia... and you.

(END)